

# Personally Speaking

All About People

Volume 1, Issue 1

DIVISION OF MENTAL RETARDATION SERVICES

May, 2005

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## New Look for DMRS

***It's sleek, it's catchy,*** and it's what we're all about! The DMRS has a new logo, developed with the input of an all-star cast of employees, providers, advocates and friends. There was much input, heated debate and argument at the DMRS Central Office during the selection process.

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## CMS to DMRS

### *You've Got the Green Light!*

Nobody is probably going to remember where they were when they heard the news, but the date is very special! It was April 14, 2005 when the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) informed TennCare that DMRS was free to begin enrolling persons into its waivers. It marked the first time in nearly five years the division could admit people to the waiver, save for persons in crisis situations.

A moratorium, first imposed in July 2000, expired January 1, but the DMRS could not begin enrollment until an implementation plan was finalized and a new provider manual promulgated. The DMRS satisfied CMS and is now moving forward.

"A great many people worked extremely hard in bringing the Division to this point," said DMRS Deputy Commissioner Stephen H. Norris. "The fact that we are admitting people into our waivers now is a strong accomplishment. We made significant changes in the way we deliver services, changes that have greatly improved the way we provide

support. I am very pleased CMS has recognized our work."

During the moratorium the waiting list for services grew substantially. As of April 14 there were 3,800 persons awaiting services. The DMRS plan is to enroll 2,000 persons into its Statewide Waiver, 38 into the Arlington Waiver and 600 into the new Self-Determination Waiver this year.

"The moratorium, while justified at the time it was levied, had become counterproductive. It was hurting families needing services," said Norris.

"Our waiting list kept getting larger. We have an aggressive, solid implementation plan in place. It is important for Tennesseans to know that if they are in need of services, they should apply

and get on our list.

"We have come a long way, but there is a lot of hard work ahead. We've scored a touchdown, but we're still playing catch-up. No one at DMRS will be satisfied until we have the lead." ■



TENNESSEE.GOV

The Official Web Site of the State of Tennessee

## Coming Attraction: Website Facelift

A logo isn't the only new item the DMRS has going! Very soon the Division will sport a new website! It is being designed for easy navigation, to be visually appealing, and contain a comprehensive array of information which will meet all stakeholders' and any visitor's needs. The DMRS webmaster Akalu Tadesse will maintain the site and update it daily. The web address will remain the same: [www.state.tn.us/dmrs](http://www.state.tn.us/dmrs).

## From the Desk of Deputy Commissioner **Stephen H. Norris**

**Welcome everyone to the first issue of *Personally Speaking*.** I hope you find our newsletter informative and pleasant reading.



It has been just over a year-and-a-half since I joined the Division. There is no doubt this is the most demanding position I have held. When I arrived, the challenges the DMRS faced were imposing. However, I quickly realized there was a valuable resource present to meet the tests – people.

We have accomplished much over the past 19 months. Waiver renewals, the new Self-Determination Waiver, expiration of the moratoriums, a new Provider Manual, and service definitions just to name a few. None of these things could have been achieved without the tireless work and dedication of our employees throughout the state. I am very appreciative of everyone at the central office, regional offices and developmental centers for their effort and support.

At one time our West, Middle and East Regional Offices all had different organizational structures. Today those structures are consistent in each region. We created positions and added staff, and have improved communication to those offices. Regional Directors Alan Bullard in the West, Kathleen Clinton in Middle, and the East's John Craven, and their staff deserve applause.

Arlington and Clover Bottom Developmental Centers have new chief officers, who have made marked improvements in the operations of those facilities. Leon Owens instituted "Person Centered" planning at Arlington. Dr. Levi Harris brought with him impressive management credentials to Clover Bottom and has enhanced the facility's performance through teamwork. Dr. Bud Meece and his group at Greene Valley have worked diligently to bring the center into compliance with the terms of our legal proceedings.

Also, at the developmental centers measuring devices were created to assure compliance with court orders, and risk management processes were instituted.

In January CMS informed us of approval regarding the Self-Determination Waiver,

and renewals of our other waivers, which resulted in the expiration of the moratoriums on enrollment. The DMRS will be able to provide services to many more people over the course of the next several years. It was the DMRS staff, providers, families and advocates working together which brought this to fruition.

One of our initiatives early on was to change the way we determine how much to pay for services. Our new rate structure is based on the assessed needs of the individuals served, and the costs to provide the necessary level of support and service. I believe this change will improve the quality of service and the provider's ability to deliver services in a cost effective manner. Over the next year we will examine the effectiveness of the new rate structure.

For the first time in six years the DMRS has produced a provider manual. A team of stakeholders, headed by DMRS Assistant Commissioner Joanna Damons, wrote the manual. Our providers now have one official source for guidelines,

*cont. page 10*

## Read All About It! New Provider Manual!

The long awaited and much anticipated DMRS Provider Manual is in use! It had been six years since the Division produced guidelines for its providers, which then was in the form of an operations manual. When Deputy Commissioner Stephen H. Norris assumed the reins of DMRS, he made writing a new manual one of his top priorities.

"The new manual combines requirements to specific DMRS waiver and state funded programs," said Norris. "This is a tool that has been greatly needed for quite some time. Now we've given our providers something to work with, which will streamline and enhance the supports and services for our population."

"Providers are very relieved to have most of the policies and regulations governing us combined in one easy-to-use volume," said Tennessee Network of Community Organizations President Betty McNeely. "We are reassured by Deputy Commissioner Norris's statement that the provider manual is a work in progress and that it will be reviewed on a regular basis, and will be revised in a timely fashion as issues surface. We appreciate the opportunities we and other stakeholders had to participate in its development."

DMRS Assistant Commissioner Joanna Damons was the manual's architect. Damons commissioned a writing

*cont. page 10*

## People Magazine Features DMRS Employee

The April 15 issue of *People* magazine reports a story on popular pain medications being pulled off shelves and given warnings following studies that revealed health risks. Melissa Hafeli, 32, works at the Middle Regional Office and was diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis when she was 18 months old. She has taken the drug Celebrex for some time. Now that drug is believed to increase the risk of heart disease and stomach problems.

Ms. Hafeli is very active in the Nashville chapter of the National Arthritis Foundation. *People* magazine contacted the national office, which referred it to Ms. Hafeli. People could not have picked a better subject.

"I've had hip and knee replacements and that helped, but only one drug has made a difference and that's Celebrex," said Ms. Hafeli. "I'm very concerned and worried about the warnings, but without the drug I'm incapacitated."

The article discusses several over-the-counter drugs and listed questions and answers regarding the developments. It also includes alternative pain relievers. For a copy of the article, contact *Personally Speaking* at 615.253.2236 or 615.741.6721. ■



## Surfin' in the Regional Offices



There's no Beach Boys music playing, but for the persons the DMRS supports, their families and the general public there's ample opportunity for surfing. That's internet surfing at the regional offices, and it's to selected state and national sites related to mental retardation and developmental disabilities. The DMRS is installing the computers in an effort to make information easier to obtain.

"We wanted to provide an easily accessible avenue for anyone seeking information on mental retardation or developmental disabilities," said DMRS Director of Information Systems Barbara Charlet. "It will be simple. A person using the computer will sign in as 'Guest,' get the DMRS web page and see a list of sites on the left side of the screen. This is just for information research and business, so the user is limited to the sites listed."

Computers are being installed at DMRS offices in Bartlett, Jackson, Nashville, Chattanooga and Knoxville. For anyone seeking directions to locations, contact the DMRS Central Office at 615.532.6530. ■

## Up Close and Personal

Two DMRS developmental centers have new chief officers. Leon Owens joined Arlington Developmental Center last year and Levi Harris assumed the reins at Clover Bottom in January.

Leon Owens

If you were to walk around Arlington Developmental Center at any given time, chances are you would encounter Leon Owens talking to one of the residents or employees, patting them on the back or hugging them. At this writing there were 188 residents and 1,060 employees at Arlington and it seems like Owens knows each and every one. He redefines the term "People Person."

"Arlington is home to the people who are here, and we should treat it as such," said Owens. "My favorite quote is by Mark Twain who said, 'You may be on the right track, but if you just sit there, you will get run over.' I apply this to how I do my job, which is being directly involved in all aspects of the facility."

Born and raised in North Carolina, Owens attended East Carolina University. He worked in a variety of



Leon Owens, Arlington Developmental Center Chief Officer



There are nearly 7.5 million persons in the United States with developmental disabilities. The majority of those people are capable of performing a variety of jobs.

The DMRS' new program "From the Heart," is providing an avenue of creativity, productivity and independence for Tennesseans with mental retardation

and developmental disabilities. The program features DMRS developmental center residents building and making products for sale to the public.

"This is a wonderful project that is really taking off," said DMRS Development Director Merlin Littlefield. "For many of the people we serve, all they need is an opportunity and a little support and assistance to show who they are and what they can do. Everyone needs to have something to do and feel good about themselves."

The goal of "From the Heart" is to design jobs that are person-centered and that support the individual's needs and desires. Workers produce their wares at adaptive work stations, utilizing innovative and customized tools under the guidance and assistance of DMRS staff.

Whether its bird houses from Arlington, dog biscuits and bath salts from Clover Bottom or greeting cards from Greene

Valley, each product is produced with a healthy amount of care and pride. These items are currently on display at Montgomery Bell State Park, and there is planned expansion of the program's product line and areas of purchase.

"From the Heart" isn't just about opportunities. The program focuses a spotlight on its workers. It's a showcase for motivation, commitment and dedication. "From the Heart" is about the abilities of people. ■



## Clover Bottom Assistive Technology in National Spotlight

The bar is being raised daily in Assistive Technology, and the people blazing new trails are right here at the DMRS. When it comes to fashioning devices that are used by children and adults with mental retardation and other disabilities, no one does it better than the Clover Bottom Developmental Center Assistive Technology (CBDC AT) Department. Director Debbie Poirier and her team are recognized as leaders in their field.

"We're very passionate about what we do," said Poirier. "We know that when we get up in the morning we're working to make a difference in someone's life. That's where the drive originates. We change lives for the better!"

The Rehab Engineering Society of North America (RESNA) is the governing body for Assistive Technology. CBDC AT presented at the RESNA Annual Conference last year and will conduct an eight hour course at this

year's gathering in June. CBDC AT stepped onto the international stage in

January, teaching a four hour course at the International Seating Symposium (ISS).



**Assistive All-Stars:** Back Row (L to R): Ann Ewbank, David Zeedar, Susan Brown, Bryan Malone, Ryan Abbot and Glenn Hudson. Middle Row (L to R): Debbie Poirier, Kent Martin, George Parrish and Mark Wencel. Front Row (L to R): Lisa Linder, Stan McKinnon and Jim Morgan (not pictured).

Assistive Technology started at CBDC in 1997 as part of the CBDC/Greene Valley lawsuit settlement agreement. The state provided healthy funding and brought in the "Best of the Best" to instruct CBDC staff. Over the years the department grew, the right combination of people joined the team, and now CBDC AT is referred to as the crème de la crème. Poirier says it's all about people.

"It's chemistry plain and simple," said Poirier. "We work well together and we all wear different hats. In this department what you have is a group of highly talented people who are committed to what they do.

**"We know that when we get up in the morning we're working to make a difference in someone's life".**

*- Debbie Poirier*

"We have a fabrication team that is second to none. We wouldn't be where we are today without their efforts. They take our ideas and turn them into reality."

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## PASS Grant Impacting People's Lives

One day recently Rob Payne visited his daughter, a fifth-grader, at school for lunch. Last month he took his teenage son rock climbing, and presently is teaching him how to drive.

What's so special about Rob's activities, you might ask. Those are normal actions for a parent. Yes, they are, but over the last few years, not for Rob.

Rob's wife, Marcy, is in her fifth year of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS),

commonly known as "Lou Gehrig's Disease." It's a rapidly progressive terminal neuromuscular illness that paralyzes the body, but leaves the intellect and senses unimpaired.

Marcy, a former competitive runner and founder of Happy Tails Humane, the no-kill animal shelter in Franklin, was diagnosed in August 2000. She stopped walking at Thanksgiving 2001. Now, she's on a ventilator and her only movement is with her right thumb.

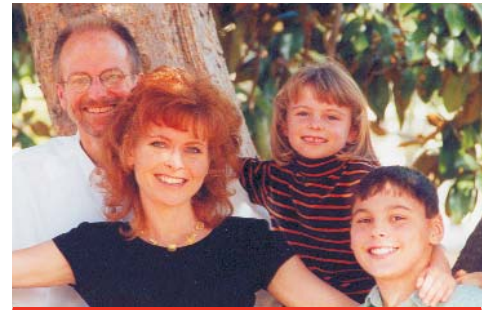
For the last two years Rob's full-time job has been taking care of Marcy. When he sold his interest in a Nashville marketing firm, life with any semblance of normality, ceased. The Paynes live in Franklin, and their friends and neighbors have been beyond supportive, especially with the children. Still, Rob's life has been Marcy's care – and that's the way it remains, but now there's a touch of normalcy.

That's thanks to a DMRS Personal Assistance Services and Supports (PASS) Grant. PASS is a federal grant awarded to the state by the Centers for Medicaid/Medicare Services (CMS). It involves Home and Community – based Services with the objective to allow the recipient an avenue of care other than institutionalization.

"Receiving the PASS Grant has had a positive effect in so many ways," said Rob. "Having a personal assistant gives me an opportunity to run errands and have time with the children. However, the important part is you have control of the services – who works for you, medical equipment, everything. The PASS program allows us to balance pay and hours to suit the circumstances. You just stay within your budget."

Rob had tried respite care from nursing companies, but they were not self-directed programs. It was difficult to find someone with the efficacy and approach to meet Marcy's needs.

In late February Cory Wendt, an ER/Trauma nurse, began caring for Marcy. The women connected and almost



**"I want everyone to know that the assistance we receive from the PASS program adds so much, and for us anyway, has given us part of our lives back."**

**Rob Payne**

immediately a bond developed. Marcy's spirits lifted tremendously and Rob was able to leave home with complete peace of mind.

"That's when I learned that my being away sometimes is good for Marcy," said Rob. She needs some time to be with other women. She needs to have a different person to talk with from time to time; a different face to see. When I return home from an outing, she tells me she missed me."

Marcy communicates with a speech synthesizer, using the movement in her thumb to control a motion device that selects alphabet and words on a screen, and then voices what is composed. The PASS Grant paid for a new and improved switch for Marcy's thumb, which speeds up the speech synthesizer so Marcy can respond much faster.

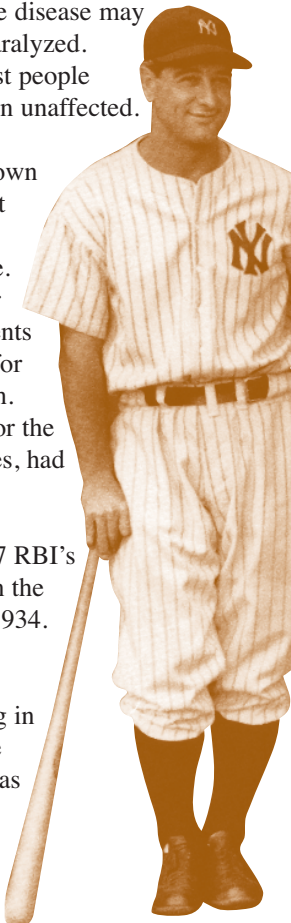
"Now she can actually say 'Goodbye' to someone before they leave," said Rob. "She's also pretty quick to tell me how to run the house, and the kids to eat their vegetables, brush their hair and take a shower. And she tells us she loves us."

The relationship between Marcy and Cory goes far beyond caretaker and patient. They're the same age and have much in common. A close friendship has developed. During a recent visit to the Payne home Marcy used her speech synthesizer to relay a message to her guest.

### What Is Lou Gehrig's Disease?

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), often referred to as "Lou Gehrig's Disease," is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord resulting in muscle weakness and atrophy. With voluntary muscle action progressively affected, patients in the latter stages of the disease may become totally paralyzed. However, for most people their minds remain unaffected.

Lou Gehrig is known as one of the most talented baseball players of all time. He is a legend for his accomplishments on the field, and for his untimely death. Gehrig, playing for the New York Yankees, had a lifetime batting average of .340, averaged over 147 RBI's a season, and won the Triple Crown in 1934. Dubbed the "Iron Horse," he is best known for playing in 2,130 consecutive games. Gehrig was diagnosed with ALS in 1939. He died on June 2, 1941. ■



## UP CLOSE...cont.

positions for over 20 years at the Caswell Center, an Intermediate Care Facility/Mental Retardation (ICF/MR) residential facility in Kinston. In 1999 he became superintendent of the Kansas Neurological Institute, an ICF/MR residential facility in Topeka. Last year he joined Arlington.

Known for his energy, Owens arrived at Arlington and hit the ground running. He instituted the "Person Centered" approach to supports and services. Arlington's mission is titled "Building Better Lives."

"'Person Centered' planning allows the person to set the direction of their plan with the expectation that the services and supports will be available to meet their lifestyle choices," said Owens. "There is more involvement by the Direct Support staff in the homes, and it's that staff, besides the family or guardian, that knows the person best."

Owens has been married to his wife Judy for 31 years. They live in Cordova, but are building a house in Arlington. They have two grown children, daughter Brook 26 and son Reid 23. Two years ago due to "Empty Nest Syndrome" a Chihuahua named "Carolina" joined the family.

Cloud Nine has been Owens figurative place of residence for over a month. While in Kansas he became a fan of former University of Kansas basketball coach Roy Williams. Williams, now at the University of North Carolina, won the NCAA Championship this past season. The tremor emanating from West Tennessee April 4 was not from the New Madrid Fault, but from Owens bouncing off the walls of his house celebrating the Tar Heel victory.

Owens knows all about winning; he's fostering all kinds of success at Arlington.

### Levi Harris

Dr. Levi Harris knows about winning too. Born and raised in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, he is a life-long University of Alabama



*Levi Harris, Clover Bottom Developmental Center Chief Officer*

football fan. He gained his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the school when Bear Bryant prowled the sidelines. However, he's a follower of all Southeastern Conference schools, so acclimation to Big Orange Country came easy. He's cheered the Vols for years.

"Oh, I know all about *Rocky Top*," said Harris laughing. "I'm not caught up in the rivalries that much. The only time I don't pull for Tennessee is when the Tide is the opponent. Go Big Orange!"

Harris's Bachelor, Masters, and Doctorate degrees were in Psychology. He says working in mental retardation and developmental disabilities is his calling. He's always enjoyed assisting people and has strong feelings for the MR population.

Harris worked 24 years at developmental centers in Alabama. He served first as a Psychologist and then Facility Director at William D. Partlow Developmental Center in Tuscaloosa, as an Administrator at Glenn Ireland Developmental Center in Tarrant, Facility Director at J.S. Tarwater Developmental Center in Wetumpka, and Facility Director at A.P. Brewer-Bayside Developmental Center in Daphne.

DMRS Assistant Commissioner for Facilities and Community Services Larry Latham is a former MR Associate Commissioner in Alabama and hired Harris to two positions. When there was a need at Clover Bottom, he knew whom to call.

"I've known Levi for a long time," said Latham. "He has excellent communication skills and knows how to bring the best out in people. Levi has always had the respect and admiration of his employees. He's a good leader."

The management principles that made Harris a strong administrator in Alabama are being applied at Clover Bottom.

"If there is a group of people striving for a goal, the key to attaining that goal is teamwork," said Harris. "You have to inspire your people and motivate them, have an open channel of communication, seek input, and create ownership. If everyone is on the same page and committed, you'll get positive results."

Harris and his wife Bobbie have been married 30 years. They have two children, Levita, age 21 and Levi II, 19, both students at the University of Alabama. Levi and Bobbie reside in Franklin. ■

## Pass Grant...cont.

"It is wonderful having Cory around. I love having a woman fixing my hair and nails and other things Rob didn't have time for. Cory is an excellent caretaker and a good friend."

Rob says his time away from Marcy adds to their interaction. He returns home with stories to tell and she looks forward to hearing them. He also realizes how much he misses her and that returning home has a good, warm feeling. Rob gives credit to the grant.

"I suspect many people in social work have already learned our life lesson, that every day is precious," said Rob. "I want everyone to know that the assistance we receive with the PASS program adds so much, and for us anyway, has given us part of our lives back."

For more information on Marcy visit her website at

[www.EveryDayIsPrecious.com](http://www.EveryDayIsPrecious.com). ■

## – L E G A L   U P D A T E –

*Several federal lawsuits have influenced the service system of DMRS over recent years. Each suit has specific orders and mandates that the division must follow. Below is the current status of each.*

### **The Arlington Developmental Center Remedial Order (1993)**

The Arlington lawsuit parties continue to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss progress. The Division is making in service delivery improvements and implementing the new Provider Manual and rates.

The Court Monitor, Nancy K. Ray, in March began her 2005 Community Status Reviews of residential provider agencies who provide services to Remedial Order class members.

Arlington Developmental Center has reduced its census to 189 and work is underway to develop more homes in West Tennessee to accommodate remaining residents ready to transition into the community.

### **The Clover Bottom and Greene Valley Developmental Center Settlement Agreement (1996)**

In late 2004, the parties of the Settlement Agreement began a series of Joint Status Reports. These reports are co-written by the parties and submitted to the court. Regular status conferences are held with the Court and the parties may receive new mandates as deemed necessary by the Court. The Division has found this process to be very helpful. The next status conference is slated for June 2005.

The State has requested a hearing date be set regarding the motion asking that Greene Valley be dismissed from the lawsuit. The State believes that Greene Valley has shown substantial compliance with the institutional requirements in the Settlement Agreement and should be dismissed. Current residents at Greene Valley would remain class members under the Settlement Agreement even though Greene Valley would be dismissed from this action. The parties have been given the opportunity to conduct reviews at Greene Valley. If the parties cannot reach an agreement regarding Greene Valley's substantial compliance, a hearing on this issue will be set in the near future.

### **The Grier Consent Decree for Waiver Service Appeals (2000)**

With the new waiver being implemented, the Division anticipated a direct effect on appeals. However, the impact of the new waiver has been minimal on the Grier appeal process. At this time, training on the new waiver and Provider Manual has been conducted with the Office of General Counsel for TennCare, the appeal staff at the TennCare Solutions Unit, and the medical consultants who review Grier appeals for medical necessity.

### **Brown Waiting List Settlement (2004)**

In 2004, the *Brown* Settlement Agreement went into effect. This lawsuit regards people waiting for DMRS waiver services. DMRS has created several new service programs to meet the needs of eligible individuals waiting for waiver services. These programs are a Self Determination Waiver program and Consumer Directed Services. In addition, Case Management services are available to Medicaid eligible individuals waiting for services. The case managers are state employees who will help the individual and his/her family navigate the various service systems, assist with eligibility and enrollment processes, as well as make referrals to other services and agencies that may be able to help the person while he/she waits for waiver services. ■

## **New Look...cont.**

The field was narrowed to a few samples, and late one March afternoon taken to Deputy Commissioner Stephen H. Norris. A crowd massed outside the Deputy Commissioner's office – like the world watching for billows of white smoke rising from the Sistine Chapel chimney.

The Deputy Commissioner quickly blessed the selected logo, which was the popular choice of those who contributed to the process. The logo, incorporating DMRS lettering, a person and the theme "All About People," reflects the very essence of the division.

"Everything we do is about the people we serve," said Norris. "At every turn our focus is providing the supports for persons with mental retardation and developmental disabilities so they can have a healthy, secure and meaningful life. The DMRS truly is, all about people."

Many thanks go to everyone who contributed to the new division logo. The DMRS Office of Protection from Harm Director Debbie Payne and Deputy Director Richard Shelton spent several late evenings reviewing submissions. It was actually Shelton who coined "All About People."

"We were discussing the logo one morning and were at somewhat of a standstill," said Payne. "Richard was hungry and went to the cafeteria for a sausage biscuit. He came back and we had the 'All About People.' It was as simple as feed Richard and get a logo." ■

# F · R · I · E · N · D · S



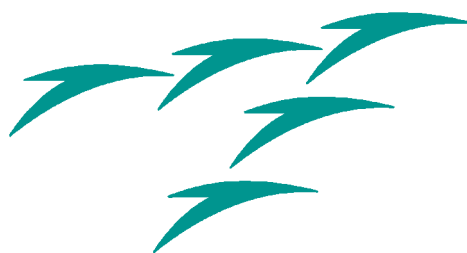
Founded in 1952 by a group of parents, The Arc is truly a grass roots movement. The Arc of Tennessee is a non-profit, membership organization comprised of people with mental retardation and other disabilities, family members, friends and professionals in the disability field. In order to empower individuals, families and communities to achieve choice, inclusiveness, diversity, acceptance, collaborative relationships, prosperity and self-sufficiency, The Arc of Tennessee is driven by the following values: Integrity, Justice, Respect, and Courage.

Advocacy is not easy and the work goes on. Three years ago The Arc of Tennessee had a vision. That vision was to have a statewide disability convention so that people of all abilities could come together to learn, share and have some plain old fun. The dream became a reality and through collaborations and partnerships the Tennessee Disability MegaConference was born.

The Tennessee Disability MegaConference is supported by a coalition of disability related organizations and state agencies. Our shared purpose is to strengthen our bonds and promote understanding as we move forward together, united in our desire for independence, choice and dignity for all people. Persons with all abilities are encouraged to attend. Respite care and CEUs are available.

The Third Annual MegaConference will be Wednesday, June 1 through Sunday

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## T E N N E S S E E D I S A B I L I T Y C O A L I T I O N

The Tennessee Disability Coalition is an alliance of organizations and individuals in Tennessee that have joined to promote the full and equal participation of men, women and children with disabilities in all aspects of life. The core purpose of the Coalition is to work for systems change and to advocate for public policies that ensure every person with a disability has the freedom and opportunity to exercise individual decisions that affect his/her own life, welfare and personal dignity.

Special emphasis is given to advocating civil rights and quality of life and upholding the values of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This basic systems change and organizing agenda has led us to other projects that help to shift the balance of power in order to empower individuals, influence society, and promote social justice. We also work to organize our member agencies' constituents and their members. This networks individuals with disabilities of all types and their families, cutting across age, disability category, economic situation, political persuasion, and areas of interest.

The Tennessee Disability Coalition has a variety of programs, some with more specialized client bases than others.

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## T E N N E S S E E C O U N C I L



## DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Nearly two years ago, representatives from eleven national organizations came together to plan a national disability policy summit, which will be held on September 22 & 23, 2005 in Washington, D.C. The purpose of **The Alliance for Full Participation Summit 2005** is to gather self advocates, advocates, public and private program administrators, researchers, educators and policymakers from across the country with the goal of planning national strategic social and policy goals for the future.

The **Alliance for Full Participation** Founding Organizations planned the Summit around three themes: Next Generation Leadership; Community Membership and Self Determination; and Quality Supports and Services. To organize participation from each state, the Alliance calls for a State Team to prepare for the Summit, participate in the Summit, and follow up in the state after the Summit. Prior to the Summit the State Team will identify barriers to goals, and strategies to overcome the barriers, in the three theme areas mentioned above.

The **Alliance for Full Participation** provides a unique opportunity for a diverse and expansive group of disability organizations to create a long range public policy agenda. For more information, contact the Alliance website at [www.allianceforfullparticipation.org](http://www.allianceforfullparticipation.org) or contact the Council on Developmental Disabilities office, 615-253-5369. ■

## The ARC...cont.

morning, June 5, 2005. Topic areas are Access, Assistive Technology, Education, Employment, Empowerment, Systems Change, Quality Supports and Administration/Management.

This year's keynote national speakers are Alex Valdez, Peggy O'Neill, Ed O'Leary, John O'Brien and Jack Pearpoint.

The MegaConference is being held at the Nashville Airport Marriott, 600 Marriott Drive, off Briley Parkway and Elm Hill Pike.

To view the program at a glance, exhibitors or to register, visit [www.tndisabilitymegaconference.org](http://www.tndisabilitymegaconference.org). If you have questions, please call The Arc of Tennessee at 615-248-5878 or 1-800-835-7077. ■

## TDC...cont.

These programs include: Systems Change, the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Program, Project VOTE!, Family Voices of Tennessee, Project BRAIN, the Advocacy Program, and the Tennessee Mental Health Consumers' Association.

The Tennessee Disability Coalition's Advocacy Program is a specialized program, through a contract with the Tennessee Division of Mental Retardation Services, of individual advocacy services. These services are available to people with mental retardation that have left or are leaving the state's institutions – Arlington Developmental Center, Nat T. Winston, Clover Bottom, and Greene Valley. Presently, there are 23 advocates providing advocacy services to over 900 individuals.

For more information about the Tennessee Disability Coalition, go to <http://www.tndisability.org/> or contact Donna DeStefano at 615-383-9442. ■

DMRS Budget Director Terry Poff has allocated her skills to TennCare. Poff withdrew her career account with the DMRS on Friday April 29 to serve as a Fiscal Director with TennCare. Poff spent the last four years at the DMRS, and is a 20-year veteran of state government. Assistant Commissioner for Administrative Services Fred Hix is exploring funding to bronze Poff's calculator and red ink pen.

## TENNCARE TERRY



**Editor's Note:** Terry has more friends than those pictured. The camera wouldn't work until the end of the party.

Back Row (L to R): Merlin Littlefield, Ted Eveland, Lisa Kent. Middle Row (L to R): Janie Warren, Karen Haynes, Terry Poff, Irfan Farouqi, Janna Williams, Burbon Patterson. Front Row (L to R): Reginald Avant, Jason Bowers.

## Assistive Technology...cont.

CBDC AT stays on the cutting-edge. Poirier's team believes positioning should be a 24/7 process. A unique piece of equipment developed by the department is a custom bed positioner. Many of the people served by CBDC AT have severe physical deformities that limit their ability to be safely positioned in a standard bed. The bed positioner is custom molded to accommodate physical deformities, and also keeps the head and trunk elevated, which is very important for respiratory health. Additionally, it is a mobile system which allows for someone to be moved easily in the event of an emergency.

The next frontier for the department is the concept of dynamic positioning systems, which will allow an individual to go from one position to another with a minimal amount of handling, which benefits the person receiving care and the caregiver.



Mark Wencil prepares a plaster mold for a custom seating system.

"Many of our people are contracted," said CBDC AT Shop Foreman Mark Wencil. "We work with individuals on positioning all day. When you put individuals in bed at night, they can slide to the bottom and you lose what you gained. The positioner accommodates a person's deformities. It's a wonderful device."

CBDC AT has an education arm, offering its expertise to schools and community therapists. Students visit for specialized field work. CBDC AT will soon be working with the University of Pittsburgh on research projects, and Washington University in St. Louis has plans to send students working on Masters and Doctoral degrees to CBDC AT for study.

A major goal of the department is to change the way the system provides for people with special needs nationally. RESNA has asked

CBDC AT to work with it on setting national guidelines and protocols. One component in that process is to ensure that AT professionals have enough time to appropriately fit custom positioning systems to individuals.

"The importance of the time that we have to spend working with someone cannot be overestimated," said Poirier. "We are not limited by the traditional for profit medical model, which allows us to meet the complex needs of the people we serve." ■



There are many acronyms and names associated with the DMRS. In each issue of *Personally Speaking* we'll serve up a small portion of Division alphabet soup.

COS	Circle of Support
ISP	Individual Support Plan
TNCO	Tennessee Community Organization
ADD	Administration on Developmental Disabilities. It can also mean Attention Deficit Disorder.

## Stephen H. Norris...cont.

which will improve supports and services for our population.

Other major initiatives included the development of our Quality Assurance and Protection from Harm offices. Quality Assurance has developed into a strong vehicle for measuring the performance of our Day and Residential Independent Support Coordinators, and Clinical Service Providers. The Protection from Harm Office has become a viable safeguard for the people we support. It is our commitment to respect and value the dignity of our people.

Our "Agency Teams Initiative" is proving successful. These teams were created to support the comprehensive annual quality assessment process, specifically to ensure follow-up to any deficiencies identified, and to promote compliance between surveys.

Finally, on behalf of everyone at the DMRS I would like to thank Governor Bredesen, Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration Commissioner Dave Goetz, and our state legislators for their backing. From the beginning the Division has received their full and complete support.

Yes, we have come a long way in 19 months, but there remains a long road to travel. The DMRS and all its stakeholders must maintain the present level of energy and commitment in order to fully and successfully implement our many initiatives. Ensuring the quality of life for the people we support is paramount.

Once again, thank you to the DMRS staff and all our stakeholders for our achievements thus far. I look forward to working with you toward future successes. ■

Sincerely,

Stephen H. Norris  
Deputy Commissioner

## Read All About It...cont.

group composed of providers, DMRS personnel, consumers, family members, and advocates. The group began work in June of last year. In early March the Division held a public meeting at Clover Bottom Developmental Center to gather feedback. Information taken from the meeting was reviewed and revisions made.

"That meeting was very successful and the input we received will be used to make additional policy decisions in the coming months," said Damons. "Writing the manual was no easy task; the people who worked on this project did a super job. It was a major commitment with long hours and a lot of hard work. We're very proud of what we've accomplished."

The writing team consisted of Damons and DMRS staff members Susan Moss and Tami Wilson, Donna DeStefano, Tennessee Disability Coalition; Robin Atwood, Tennessee Network of Community Organizations; providers Steve Singleton and Jim Henry, Omni Visions; Walter Hunt, Bradley-Cleveland; Michelle McCain, Engstrom; June Phillips, Team Centers; Don Redden, Dickson Development Center, Bev Witt, Orange Grove Center; Pam Bullard of TennCare; and Pat Fain, a parent.

A CD copy of the DMRS Provider Manual can be obtained by contacting Sara Warren at 615-741-6157 or email her at [Sara.Warren@state.tn.us](mailto:Sara.Warren@state.tn.us). The manual is also posted on the DMRS website, [www.state.tn.us/dmrs](http://www.state.tn.us/dmrs). ■

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## Personally Speaking Listens!

We hope you enjoyed this first edition of *Personally Speaking*. The newsletter will be produced bi-monthly and appear on the DMRS website and in print. Got ideas or opinions? Send them our way! Thank you for your interest and look for the next *Personally Speaking* in July.

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## Thank You

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